DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 229 PS 023 101

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TITLE	High Schools Gear Up To Create Effective School and Family Partnerships.
INSTITUTION	Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.; Johns Hopkins Univ., Baltimore, Md.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jun 94
CONTRACT	R117Q00031
NOTE	13p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Dissemination Office, Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, The Johns Hopkins University, 3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218 (Free; full reports of each study may be ordered for a charge).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT	Research and Development Report; n5 June 1994
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Programs; *Family Programs; Family School Relationship; High Schools; High School Students; *Integrated Services; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Literacy Education; Middle Schools; *Parent Participation; Parent Student Relationship; *Partnerships in Education; School Community Relationship; *Student Needs
IDENTIFIERS	*Family Literacy; Family Resource and Support Programs; Family Support

ABSTRACT

Parent involvement in their children's schooling declines dramatically as students move through middle school and high school, though students still want and need their parents' help to reach educational goals. This newsletter presents several articles on partnerships between schools and families and between families and community programs. The title article describes a collaborative effort at six schools to identify parent-school partnership practices that are appropriate at the high school level, how the schools can develop and implement such practices, and how the practices actually affect those involved. The remaining articles are: (1) "Small Wins of Family Literacy Programs Can Be Extended into Middle Schools"; (2) "How Parent Centers Strengthen Family, School, and Community Relationships in Four Urban Schools"; (3) "A Manual Provides Guidelines for Coaching in Community Programs"; and (4) "Moving toward Comprehensiveness in Integrating Family Services through Collaboration and Empowerment: How Are We Doing?" (HTH)

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT REPORT

CENTER ON FAMILIES, COMMUNITIES, SCHOOLS & CHILDREN'S LEARNING June 1994, No. 5

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High Schools Gear Up to Create Effective School and Family Partnerships

Parent involvement in their children's schooling declines dramatically as students move from the elementary grades through middle school and high school. But students continue to want and need the support of their parents and other adults to help them reach their educational goals.

Center researchers Joyce L. Epstein and Lori J. Connors have been working with six high schools—two urban, two suburban, and two rural—in a collaborative effort to identify what parent-school partnership practices are appropriate at the high school level, how the schools can develop and implement such practices, and how the practices actually affect the students, parents, and teachers involved.

In a series of meetings, Epstein and Connors and teams from each school discussed the schools' current practices—what they were already doing to involve families and their ideas for doing more. Each school also administered surveys to 9th grade teachers, parents, and students to provide information from each group about attitudes and beliefs about family involvement and the school, current practices considered weak or strong, levels of current parent involvement (including school practices for reaching out to contact parents), and demographic and school-specific information. The researchers have analyzed the data provided by these surveys and summarized the preliminary results, which are being used by the schools to develop multi-year action plans for a comprehensive and responsive set of family partnership practices at the high school level.

Current Practices and Ideas: Some Blue-Chip Stocks in the Trust Fund, But Some Junk Bonds Too

The six high schools are all part of Maryland's Tomorrow—a state drop-out prevention initiative that puts family involvement on the school agenda. Thus these high schools already had some practices underway, although none had worked systematically to develop their programs. Epstein and Connors describe where these schools are starting from—the existing practices in each school—as a "trust fund," recognizing that each school's past practices can be built upon to create further partnerships, and also recognizing that trust is a primary element in the effort to develop comprehensive practices of partnership over time.

An action team from each school and Center researchers Epstein and Connors collaborated to identify their trust funds—a combination of existing practices and ideas for further practices. The schools and researchers categorized the activities that were being conducted according to the six-type framework developed by Epstein to help schools build strong family, school, and community partnerships.

Type I—Parenting/Adolescent Development. This refers to schools helping to improve parents' understanding of adolescent development, parenting skills, and the conditions at home for learning. The school also seeks to improve its own understanding of the families of its students. Activities and ideas in the trust funds of the six high schools included home visits, family support groups, referrals for special services, social services, providing information to parents about teens, and providing parenting skills for teen parents.

Type II—Communicating. This refers to the basic obligations of schools to improve the communications from school to home and from home to school about school programs and students' progress, including the use of letters, memos, report cards, newsletters, conferences, and other mechanisms. Activities and ideas included easing the transition to high school (orien-

IN THIS ISSUE

School "trust funds" support effective partnerships 1
Family literacy program in middle school 4
Case studies of parent centers in urban schools .. 6
Guidelines for coaching ... 8
Integrating family services: How are we doing? 9

tation letters, tours for middle grade students, summer and fall orientations for students and parents), holding back-to-school nights, signing pledges/contracts with parents, using phone and mail communications (including newsletters), holding conferences, providing information on school policies and programs.

Each school's past practices can be built upon to create further partnerships ...Trust is a primary element.

Type III—Volunteering. This refers to the involvement in school of parent and community volunteers, and the involvement of parents and others who come to the school to support and watch student performances, sports, and other events. High school practices and ideas included volunteer activities (parents help other parents, call about attendance, talk about their careers, mentor students), and increasing family attendance at school events.

Type IV—Learning Activities at Home. This refers to improving family involvement in learning activities at home, including involvement in homework, classwork, and curricular-related interactions and decisions. Activities and ideas from the high schools included helping parents to help students set goals and select courses, providing college information, and conducting career transition programs.

Type V—Decision Making. This refers to parents and other community residents in advisory, decision-making, or advocacy roles in parent associations, advisory committees, and school improvement or school site councils. It also refers to parent and community activists in independent advocacy groups that work for school improvement. The six high schools' activities and ideas included creating more active parent organizations, and increasing the numbers of parents, students, and community members on advisory and decision-making groups.

Type VI—Collaborating with the Community. This refers to activities of schools, families, or students involving any of the community organizations or institutions which share some responsibility for children's development and success. High school activities and ideas included community involvement in school-linked health care programs, delineating a clear role for families in business-school partnerships, offering workshops at school about community resources, and informing families about students' community service activities and requirements.

Thus the high schools, with their current practices and their ideas for more, had trust funds upon which to build. Some were better endowed than others, and some of the endowments were more idea-based than practice-based.

Epstein and Connors note that "In these high schools, as in most others, past efforts of partnership have been limited. Few parents are informed about or involved in their teens' education. Even the most basic communications are not systematized to reach all families, and many ... are limited to negative messages or discussions about students' problems. Families are rarely guided to conduct discussions with their teens about important school decisions or plans for their future."

The next task was to examine the schools' current practices and ideas, make improvements, and add other practices based on the specific needs of their school's teachers, students, and families. These needs were identified through surveys conducted by each school, with the data for each analyzed by the researchers on the project.

Survey Results: Teachers, Students, and Parents Provide Information for Building Partnerships

Teachers, students, and parents, through the surveys, discussed their attitudes toward their school and the importance of family involvement, and contributed their thoughts about the current condition of parent involvement practices at the high school, what practices they would like to see put into place, and suggestions for next steps that should be taken.

Four themes emerged from Connors' and Epstein's analyses of the data on attitudes: school and community relationships, importance of parent involvement and willingness to be involved, time and training for school-family partnership activities, and the frequency, amount, and type of homework assigned.

There's much agreement by all three groups of respondents in these areas, with some differences. Teachers, parents, and students at all six high schools worry about their communities being unsafe and not having good after-school and evening activities for teens—in general, recognizing that all the schools need to strengthen connections with their communities. At the same time, they tend to rate their school itself as a good place (78% of parents, 62% of students, and 49% of teachers), and more than 90% of parents reported being welcome at their teen's high school.

More than 90% of the parents and teachers and 82% of the students agreed that parent involvement was needed at the high school level. And many parents (more than 80%) said they wanted to be more involved, a view supported by more than 50% of students, who want their parents to be more involved. Only 32% of the teachers, however, felt that it was their responsibility to involve parents.

Further agreement among teachers, students, and parents occurs on the issue of time—nobody has a lot to spare. About 50% of the teachers say they don't have enough time to involve families; about 50% of students say they don't have enough time to talk to their parent about school or homework, and about 25% of parents say they do not have enough time to talk with their teen on a daily basis about school.

School Practices. Teachers, parents, and students rated how well their school was conducting activities within the six types of school-family-community partnership practices. They identified practices that were currently strong, needed improvement, or needed to be added, forming a profile of "opportunities for growth" for each school. Again, there were many areas of agreement among the groups, but some differences.

In all the high schools, parents (72%), students (61%), and teachers (95%) believed that the school should start or improve practices to help parents understand more about adolescent development. Teachers, parents, and students also felt that communication practices should be improved in three ways: reach more families with information about school programs and student progress; contact families more often with positive news about students, and provide more information to help students plan their futures. Teachers (88%) clearly supported the idea that more parents and other community members should volunteer to help at school—but 70% of the parents noted that they had never been asked to volunteer. Students weren't entirely sold on the idea of their parents being active in the school—40% thought it was not important to "invite my parents to become volunteers," 22% said it was not important to "invite parents to school programs or events," and 55% said no, don't ask my parent to go on a class trip.

Teachers, parents, and students in all six schools "felt that practices to assist parents in monitoring and improving student homework should be developed or strengthened" Connors and Epstein note. At the same time, most parents say they are doing the four practices that teachers think are most important: checking homework (85% of parents say they talk to their teen about homework); talking to the teen about school at home (94% of parents say they talk to their teen about school); telling teen that school is important (88% of parents say yes, they do this), and helping the teen balance activities(88% of parents say they help their teen plan time for homework, chores, and other responsibilities).

All groups agreed that parents should be included on committees to review school policy and the curriculum, and in other decision making groups. Many students (70%) said that they too want to be included on committees that make decisions about the school As for community involvement—parents and students say that the best thing communities can do is provide employment or job training to teens. More than 80% of the parents wanted information on summer and part-

Themes and Issues in Developing High School Partnerships with Families and Communities

Several general themes and issues have emerged from the collaborative effort of the researchers and high schools to create school-family-community partnerships that have implications for the design of programs and their progress. For example:

Barriers Exist That Hinder Development. The school action teams identified ten barriers to effective school and family partnerships in high schools. A partial list includes teachers' assumptions that many parents are uninterested in their children's education, teachers' lack of knowledge about effective practices or how to adapt practices, and families' transportation, child care, and work-schedule problems.

Home-to-School Information is Needed. Schools need but don't get enough of the good information that families can provide about their teenagers' talents and needs.

The Mail Doesn't Always Get Through. Schools have little confidence that students will carry messages and reports home to their families, but mailing is not much better— it takes money, address lists are difficult to keep up to date, and many students intercept mail from the school before a parent can get i t.

Students Must Be in the Loop. At the high school level, students must be active participants in school-family-community partnerships.

Some Practices Are More Pertinent for High Schools. A number of basic practices in each type of school-family-community partnership are especially appropriate in high schools. To improve parenting skills, schools can provide useful and easy to read information about adolescent development; to improve communications, schools should establish strong connections with parents at the point of transition between middle grades and high schools; to organize volunteers effectively, schools should recruit and coordinate volunteers to help students explore occupations and work sites; to involve families in learning at home, schools should provide materials and information about setting academic goals, making course choices, and carrying out postsecondary plans.

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time jobs for teens; more than 70% wanted information on job training for teens; and the students themselves wanted information about job training (56%) and after-school jobs (65%).

"The activities that parents, students, and teachers would like their school to begin or improve were similar for schools in city, suburban, and rural locations," Connors and Epstein note. "High school teachers, students, and families ... have a surprisingly common vision of high schools that inform and involve families in their teens' education."

Some Topics Are Especially Important for High Schools

There are reasons why parent involvement drops off drastically in high schools. And each of these reasons becomes a special topic that programs of school-family-community partnerships at the high school level have to deal with. These include the needs that adolescents have for more autonomy and responsibility, more working parents who live further from the high schools, the more complex organization of the high school, and high school teachers who have greater numbers of students to teach, more specialized training, and more families to involve.

The school survey results have implications for building partnerships that deal with these topics. For example, more than 70% of the students say that they would like to be included in parent-teacher conferences, reflecting their needs to assume responsibility and maintain their autonomy. More than half of the students reported that they make decisions *alone* about their high school courses, perhaps reflecting autonomy, but also implying the need for more parent input in making such truly crucial decisions.

Eighty-one percent of the high-school teachers say that family involvement is important, and 33% say they personally strongly support it—but only 3% of them think that parents strongly support it. A major task of high school partnerships will be to convince these teachers that parents really do want to be involved and that the teachers can effectively involve most families. Survey data from parents such as that collected in these six high schools can help teachers see the similarities in family and school goals for better involvement.

Next Steps

The high schools in this project are already engaged in implementing new and improved practices for ninth-grade students and families, and they'll follow up this work by extending the practices to inform and involve families throughout the grades. Examples of the practices they'll be building on include:

- A five-session workshop series in which parents discuss teen behavior and appropriate parenting practices
- "Survival packets" given to each 9th-grade parent which include school telephone numbers, important meeting dates, school policies
- Students work on a "ten-year plan" for their futures and discuss their goals with a family member.

Connors and Epstein suggest some "get started" steps for other urban, suburban, or rural high schools. Creating an "Action Team for School-Family-Community Partnerships" is the first step. Basic funding must then be secured (the project schools each have a small stipend per semester to work with).

The Action Team needs to get information about what partnerships practices the school's teachers, students, and families are interested in pursuing. While gathering this information the team can begin selecting appropriate practices, including some basic ideas outlined by the high schools in this project. The researchers provide a chart of basic practices, covering the six types of school, family, and community partnerships, that might be considered by "any high school." ■

Small Wins of Family Literacy Programs Can Be Extended Into Middle Schools

Family literacy programs—which combine adult literacy education and early childhood education with parenting education—are "achieving small, but consistent and concrete, improvements in both adults' and children's learning and educationally supportive behaviors," according to Center researcher Lori J. Connors of Johns Hopkins University.

In addition, her evaluation of a family literacy program based in a middle school finds evidence that these "small wins" might be attainable also for parents of students in the middle grades.

Family literacy programs work from a holistic premise, Connors says: "Deep and lasting change will occur only when parents have adequate literacy skills to enable them to support their families, economically and educationally, and when children's growth and development is sustained." Thus these programs have multiple objectives—they seek to develop positive attitudes toward education, to improve parenting practices, to provide more exposure to literacy activities, to improve adult literacy (including receiving a GED and obtaining jobs), and to improve learning skills in children.

Connors reviews the reported results from four family literacy programs on each of these objectives. Table 1 shows the results for the Parent and Child Education (PACE) program, the Kenan Trust Family Literacy Project, the National Even Start Project, and Project SELF HELP. Most of these programs are in early stages of evaluation, and their measures are not always the best, but some immediate, short-term gains have been found. The table clearly shows "a series of small wins," Connors notes. And while any one small win might be relatively unimportant on its own, a series of small wins "can create major changes in individuals, families, practice, and policy."

Family Literacy at the Middle School

Family literacy programs have been implemented with parents of preschoolers and elementary school children—but can the model also be implemented at the middle school level, to break the intergenerational cycle of poor school achievement for adolescents and their parents? Can programs be developed that not only provide parenting education and improve the literacy of parents, but also address adolescent needs for autonomy while capturing their widely fluctuating interests?

The Parent Academy, located in a public middle school in the inner-city of Baltimore, serves families of the middle school and surrounding school community. The project is a community agency and school collaboration that offers adult literacy services and parenting education for adults, and homework help for students. In its first year (November 1992 through June 1993), twenty-one parents enrolled in the program, and a total of 85 classes were conducted in the areas of reading, math, writing, parenting, and life skills. Two-hour classes were held on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays in the late afternoon.

A unique feature of the project included joint parent-child writing using the school's computers. The program's instructors first allowed time for the parents to become familiar with the computers without their children present. Then, in the parent-child activities, the instructor posed a question and the parents and children responded to it jointly on the computer, or the parent or child generated the computer dialogue, or the parent and child worked together to write a poem on the computer.

"The joint dialogue component on the computer needs further development," Connors notes, "but holds promise as a method to increase both parent-child communication and the computer literacy skills of both parents and children."

Connors' evaluation of the development, implementation, and outcomes of the program was based on parent and staff interviews, classroom observations, and logs kept by the Parent Academy staff. She found the usual first-year start-up problems—irregular attendance, a 61 percent retention rate (of the 21 initial participants, 13 logged enough time in the program to count as being "served"), the need to revise curriculum to better meet participants' needs, delay in obtaining access to computers for use in the parent-child joint writing activities, and so on.

But staff interviews at the end of the year reflected a positive consensus that the program was having some success. The adult literacy component had been implemented, and suggestions based on first-year experience would help to fully implement all program components next year. The school's faculty had accepted and supported the program.

And parent interviews revealed positive outcomes. Parents reported that their new literacy skills improved their daily lives, from writing grocery lists to balanc-

Table 1
A Comparison of Expected Effects
With Reported Results of Four Family Literacy Programs

Expected Effects	Pace's Reported Results	Kenan's Reported Results	Even Start's Reported Results	Self Help's Reported Results
Improved Attitude Towards Education	parents' expectations of children's future education significantly improved	many parents more confident in ability to learn, expected children to complete high school	parents increased expectations for child's school success and graduation from high school	many parents had higher expecta- t ns for children's fu.ure education
Improved Parenting Skills	parents gave their children more choices and increased independence more often	many parents more patient with children at home, talked to children instead of spanking	parents more patient and used less physical punishment, more positive communication with children	many parents improved their use of positive communication and discipline techniques with their children
Greater Literacy Models in the Home	parents increased reading at home, engaged in "school-like" activities with children, sang songs with children	many parents increased reading of newspapers and books, helped children with homework more often	parents provided more reading materials in the home	many parents provided place for homework, had library cards, provided more educational resources
Improved *Adult* Literacy including receiving a GED and obtaining jobs	70% received GED or raised academic levels by 2 or more grades	many passed the GED, entered community college, had full or part-time job	small positive gains on pre-post measures of literacy	math and life skill scores improved significantly
Improved Learning Skills in *Children*	significant improvement in children's learning skills	75% ranked in upper half and 35% ranked in top fourth of class according to teachers	improved on tests of school readiness and language development	teacher ratings of elementary students improved, reading skills maintained over the summer, preschool literacy skills improved

ing their checkbooks to helping their children with math homework.

"The Parent Academy was beginning to reach some of the goals for participants," Connors found. "Some participants had begun to improve their adult literacy skills in preparation for higher level basic education classes. Some participants had improved their parenting skills and self-confidence as their children's primary educator. Parents viewed the school and school-related staff as positive, supportive, and available as a personal resource for their own and their children's needs."

Where To From Here?

Family literacy programs are ambitious endeavors—they tackle both low levels of literacy in adult populations and low levels of academic attainment of schoolchildren. And so far, Connors finds, they are producing some small wins that are "valuable gains" on the road to long-term change." But major issues remain to be studied and resolved if these programs are to achieve their full potential. Connors cites five issues.

Clarifying program labels and expectations. Our society needs a range of literacy services. Our expectations for what these services can accomplish and our measurements of their accomplishments need to be tailored to actual program goals and objectives. Family literacy interventions, family-focused interventions, adult education interventions, and so on need to be clearly described in terms of who they serve and what they are expected to accomplish.

Developing successful school-community collaborative relationships. These efforts require "patience and nurturing," Connors notes. Successful collaborations between schools and community organizations to provide family literacy programs require planning together, sharing responsibilities, and developing visibility —and allocations of time and resources must be sufficient.

Developing better methods of instruction and measures of adult literacy. Learner-centered instruction, rather than drill and memorization of out-of-context skills, may be more effective in keeping adults in literacy programs—but many participants want to complete their high school equivalency exam, a very basic-skills oriented test. And there's a further complication, Connors notes. Standardized instruments that measure the growth of adults' literacy skills may not adequately capture what is taught or what is needed by adults once they leave the program.

Integrating evaluation into ongoing program development and staff training. Program evaluation can provide policy makers, funders, and practitioners with evidence that the program is beneficial and how it can be made more beneficial. But program evaluators (researchers) and program staff have different skills, different tasks to accomplish, and often little awareness of the complexities of each other's roles. Program staff and evaluators need to participate jointly in program development, implementation, and outcome assessment to develop awareness, build trust, and share responsibilities.

Providing family literacy services in middle schools. Adolescents continue to need the active support and involvement of their families. The potential of family literacy programs to achieve the multiple benefits of improved adult literacy, improved parenting skills, and improved outcomes for adolescent children needs to be developed and tested at middle school levels. ■

How Parent Centers Strengthen Family, School, and Community Relationships In Four Urban Schools

In a set of case studies of four urban schools, Center researcher Vivian Johnson takes an in-depth look at how parent centers can create linkages among home, school, and community that are warm, persistent, flexible, and inclusive. She examines how parent center activities can push beyond traditional parent-teacher relationships to the development of partnerships and a sense of community.

"The process of building home-school-community partnerships is very difficult," Johnson says. "The tradition, culture, and structure of daily life in most schools do not promote partnerships with parents or community members. These case study schools have consciously modified these attributes to make partnership possible."

"At a time when rhetorical support makes discussion of parent involvement commonplace," she notes, "it continues to be difficult to sustain parent involvement programs, especially in urban areas. The four urban schools' persistence and achievement is therefore especially noteworthy."

Two of the case study schools are in Boston and two are in San Diego. Three are elementary; one is junior high, and all the schools vary in size and in the racial and language backgrounds of their student populations. Johnson gathered her case study data through observations of the parent center activities, review of school and parent center documents, and interviews with principals, teachers, parents, parent center coordinators, and community participants, all conducted during site visits.

In each case study, Johnson presents a vignette that illustrates the activities of the center, followed by analyses of how each center's various practices bring the school, its families, and its community closer together. She follows this with cross-site analyses—looking at the four centers as a whole—to examine how parent centers are influenced by and influence policy, who is served by such centers and who is not, and the effects of the centers on the participants and the children in the schools. Finally, she draws implications for policy in four areas: child care, integrated services, teacher leadership, and home visits.

John P. Holland Elementary School (Boston). Johnson's vignette of this school describes the hustle and bustle on a Friday morning as the parent center runs a food bank at the school. The center also provides training for parents to work in classrooms or provide individual tutoring for students, and offers information, education, and training programs for parents and support groups on special topics that parents request.

Two "parent home workers" from the center visit parents on request to show them how to help their children with homework or help them with referrals to community agencies. Teachers working with parents in the center have developed learning games to send home to parents, to use with their children to practice school skills. The center has also offered a computer course, in both Spanish and English, for the past three years.

Standardized Scores Rising to Well-Above Average

Teachers and parents in the school, Johnson reports, point with pride to increases in children's percentile rankings on standardized tests (from below average to well above average) that have run parallel to the increase in parent participation in the school, with children whose parents were most involved in home learning making the greatest gains.

Patrick O'Hearn Elementary School (Boston). It's not just a place; it's a collaborative relationship. The family center at O'Hearn (with the word *family* deliberately selected to denote the center's emphasis on including everyone) shares space with the school library —it doesn't have a place all its own. But this fits perfectly with the school's overall emphasis on inclusion.

"The point...," Johnson notes, "is not simply to have a place, a center, where people can come, the point is to develop collaborative relationships between the school and families. A parent center is a useful part of that effort, and lack of adequate space does not deter the effort."

The O'Hearn Family Center has five committees—social events, educational workshops, family support group, food/maintenance, and special education support—each headed by two or three parents, with the leadership positions rotating. The principal at O'Hearn noted: "The objective is to empower people rather than create dependency on one person."

The point is to develop collaborative relationships between the school and families. A parent center is a useful part of that effort.

Special Events Welcome All

The family center holds special events such as an annual welcome breakfast, apple picking time, and family math nights. In Johnson's vignette, she describes the comfortable interaction that occurs at the annual welcome breakfast. "Toddlers sit on the floor looking at picture books or eating breakfast with other family members while infants sit on laps or in strollers next to parents. In the breakfast line and at the tables, families already active in the school welcome newcomers, teachers drop in between classes to greet families and eat, and the principal speaks with each family as he goes from one table to the next. Informal discussion about the school, its mission and programs is heard around the tables...."

Alonzo E. Horton Elementary School (San Diego). Johnson's vignette of this school presents a discussion, in Spanish, between a workshop leader and a parent about how to help children with their homework. Such discussions also occur in English and in Laotian, Johnson points out, as one of the hallmarks of the developing parent center program in this school is participation in workshops by Latino, African-American, and Laotian parents to learn how to be effectively involved in their children's education in school and at home. These workshops are "mediating structures" to link schools to families. Those for Latino and African-American parents are provided by community groups; the workshop for Laotian parents is provided by their children's bilingual education teacher.

Under a state-funded program operating in the school, two Outreach Workers conduct home visits, and these workers have become closely connected to families in the school. In collaboration with the parents, school staff, and the principal, they are developing programs responsive to the needs that parents identify.

At the time of Johnson's visits, the parent center at Horton school did not have its own physical space. The school had not established a parent center and then sought to develop programs to be part of the center; instead, many programs of parent-school partnership had been and were being developed, and a parent center space was then designated in the school because a place was needed to coordinate these programs.

Memorial Academy for International Baccalaureate Preparation (San Diego). This primarily Latino junior high school maintains high levels of parent involvement in grade levels where such involvement is usually minimal. One reason for the high levels, Johnson notes, is that the school's Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) and the parent center are a combined effort—the PTSA has expanded beyond its traditional "raising funds and holding special events" role and created a center where parents gather and plan programs of family support as well as support for students, teachers, and the instructional program of the school.

Parents Provide Unique Support for Teachers

Support for teachers and the instructional program of the school is clearly illustrated in Johnson's vignette on this school, which describes *Parents' Presence*, a program that is simple in design but potentially powerful in effect. Teachers who are experiencing disruption or misbehavior in a class send a note to the parent center briefly describing their problem. When the class meets again or soon after, two or three

parents appear and "sit in" during the class. Johnson says: "Most misbehaving students respond positively to the powerful message given by the parents' presence in the room—that parents support the teacher and the other students who are behaving appropriately.... That presence shows they care about students, they know what is going on in classrooms, and they are partners with teachers....Almost all students get the message and respond positively."

The principal at Memorial Academy points out that "The fact that teachers take parents up on their offer to sit in classrooms shows that teachers feel *comfortable* with parents in the classroom; there's no threatening factor there...."

Together, the four case studies illustrate the diversity of activities underway in parent centers, Johnson says—activities with families that support students, teachers, and schools, and that enable families to influence their children's academic progress. Johnson concludes: "By serving as a special connector to pull parents, teachers, students, and community participants together and to increase the frequency and duration of communication among them, parent centers have the potential to promote partnerships and cooperative efforts within the whole village to help all children succeed." ■

Manual Provides Guidelines for Coaching in Community Programs

Adult and peer volunteers, business partners, and paid helpers in community and school settings often find themselves filling an important but usually not clearly defined role— in their work in programs to promote the learning and development of children, they need to be a coach. Not a teacher, not a mentor, not a parent (and yet all of these). Not a sage on the stage, not a role model and facilitator, not a loving and supportive mother or father (and yet all of these). They have to be a coach.

In a previous review of the role of coaching in community settings, Saundra Murray Nettles of Johns Hopkins defined coaching as "instruction that places the responsibility for learning in the learner and fosters the development of skill through vigorous use of teaching practices, provision of continuous feedback on performance in settings designed for practice or display of mastery, and provision of companionship and other forms of social support."

Based on her definition, Nettles has now produced a practitioner's manual to help volunteers in community settings understand what coaching is all about and apply proven coaching techniques to their own efforts.

The manual describes a variety of practices that employers, volunteers, and paid helpers can use in their work with youth. Four sections cover the components of effective coaching—teaching, assessing performance, structuring the learning environment, and providing social support. A final section describes the qualities and skills that coaches need and provides a selected bibliography of resources for obtaining specialized knowledge in many areas where coaching is carried out.

Throughout the manual, Nettles provides an overview of each coaching practice, strategies for carrying out the practice, and resources to get further information. She also provides questions and guidelines for users to reflect on their own previous practices and to deepen their understanding of the coaching elements described.

A Coach Teaches

A coach models, uses rewards to stimulate participation, asks questions, gives instructions, and provides a cognitive structure for learning, which basically means providing a step-by-step way to think about something.

Demonstration is a strategy for providing a cognitive structure that combines a lecture with visual aids or illustrations. "The coach performs the demonstrations for the learner, and in the process shows the learner what and how to do something. Then the coach explains *why* it is done, *where* it is done, and *when* it is done."

A strategy that coaches use in giving instructions is called "scold/reinstruction." This is a verbal statement that refers to previous instruction, but is combined with a scold. For example: "How many times do I have to tell you ...," followed by repetition of a previous instruction ("...to bend those knees," "...to tighten that last bolt," "...to follow through").

Using the "hustle" to increase the vigor and intensity of instruction can also be effective. You can a use the "hustle," Nettles notes, by simply repeating the word itself or by using phrases such as"keep it going."

A Coach Assesses Performance

A coach has to establish a baseline— find out what the learner already knows and can do—before trying to change performance. The coach also has to do a job analysis, which is a detailed description of each increment of the total job to be done or the total earning to be accomplished (for example, learning to construct theater stage sets, or to pass a math unit). Then a coach has to give feedback in a way that improves performance or corrects inappropriate or erroneous performance.

"Providing praise alone does not qualify as feedback," Nettles cautions. "Praise plus information on how well the learner is doing compared to a standard qualifies

as feedback." Thus establishing standards of performance is a requirement for being able to provide effective feedback. A coach can also get help from a learner's peers in providing feedback, encouraging them to explain to other learners why a performance worked or did not work.

A Coach Structures the Learning Environment

A coach can structure the learning environment so that it includes the elements conducive to learning. Nettles discusses how to provide time for learners to practice their skills, plan effective workshops, incorporate teamwork into the environment, have students use journals to reflect on their learning, and have students use visualization to improve their performance.

Providing time for learners to practice their skills, Nettles points out, means allowing ample practice time for all (not just the most proficient). It also means providing time for mistakes to be made—an essential part of the learning process. Practice time should proceed through an overview of what will be practiced, a template (a guide) for correct performance of the skill, and segments of practice that allow the students to learn part of the skill. Practice sessions should allow time for learners to get used to the practice environment, should begin with a task that the learner can do without assistance, and should then build on the learner's skills.

Structured workshops can be used in many coaching activities—for example, filmmaking and writing workshops are common in the arts. Many structured learning experiences in other fields—experiential learning, internships, apprenticeships—are similar to workshop experiences, Nettles notes. All structured learning experiences need to incorporate three elements: action, reflection, and application to new experiences, activities, or events.

A Coach Provides Social Support

A coach provides social support by helping learners commit themselves to achieving goals, by fostering self-determination, and by bringing parents and mentors into the coaching process.

Coaches can help learners commit themselves to achieving goals "even when student motivation is fairly low or nonexistent at the outset," Nettles notes. Research shows that commitment can be fostered regardless of whether the goal comes from within the student or from some other source. Nettles provides strategies for getting learners to commit to goals whether they are set by the learners themselves, set in participation with others, or simply assigned by the coach. She also provides strategies for promoting and building upon the intrinsic motivation of children and adolescents, in order to foster self-determination.

Finally, Nettles stresses the need to involve parents and mentors in the coaching process. Parent roles complement coaching roles, and vice versa. "Parents use many of the techniques described throughout this manual," Nettles says. And in many ways, mentoring and coaching roles overlap, although "coaching is oriented toward building skill in a performance area, and mentoring focuses on relationships." Nettles provides strategies that a coach can use to get both parents and mentors even more involved in the coaching process.

Resources for Specialized Knowledge

The *Practitioner's Manual* provides guidelines and strategies for carrying out the general functions of coaching, but being a coach also requires specialized knowledge."

Academic coaches should know tutoring," Nettles states. "Drama coaches should know about the mechanics of putting on performances and about acting. Job coaches need to know how to match clients with jobs, on-the-job training, job development, and job analysis."

A final section of the manual provides an annotated bibliography of selected resources that can provide coaches with more specialized knowledge about apprenticeships, community involvement, conducting meetings, cooperative learning, drug abuse prevention, group effectiveness, industry-education partnerships, job coaching, lifeskills training, mentoring, needs assessment, parent involvement, pregnancy prevention, tutoring, violence prevention, and youth development. ■

Moving Toward Comprehensiveness in Integrating Family Services through Collaboration and Empowerment: How Are We Doing?

Center researchers tracking the effectiveness of federal, state, and local policies in providing educational, health, and social services for children and families have some words of advice for all the policy makers involved: think comprehensiveness, think collaboration, think empowerment—and think of them all at the same time.

"If progress toward comprehensive services across areas of need, ages, and categories is the goal of policymakers and administrators—and we believe it should

be—then collaboration, including family empowerment, offers considerable promise as a strategy," say Don Davies, Patricia Burch, and Ameetha Palanki, at Boston University.

The researchers are examining the progress of federal, state, and local service programs by monitoring reported events and trends, interviewing policymakers at various levels, and conducting site visits of promising programs. In a recent report, they concentrate on policies implemented in four areas: service integration, easing transitions from early childhood to school, parent involvement, and migrant and homeless families and children.

In each of these areas, they examine selected Federal and state policies to create local collaborative and empowering programs, and provide brief case studies of programs which show promise to increase comprehensiveness through strategies of collaboration and family empowerment. A major emphasis in this study, they note, is "to move beyond describing flaws and barriers to comprehensiveness to locating positive examples of collaboration, including at the family empowerment level.

Promising Efforts

The researchers conclude that fragmentation of services and lack of collaboration and empowerment remain the norm, but their mini case studies describe some promising efforts that are occurring. They present five implications that may inform small-scale modifications or plans for systemic change.

1. Federal programs are not often well coordinated with state initiatives, but they can be. Federal policies to encourage comprehensiveness can produce positive results at the state and local level; however, there continues to be Federal by-passing of states, lack of coordinated Federal-state planning, and mandates that are ambiguous, duplicative of other efforts, underfunded, and inflexibly constricted by narrow categorical definitions.

The researchers note a few good examples of Federal efforts to address these flaws through collaboration. The Head Start Transition Demonstration Projects encourage collaboration at the inter-agency and intra-agency and worker-family levels, and try to provide continuity in parent involvement in decision making and other areas from early childhood into the public schools.

2. State-level policies are not often well coordinated with local practices, but they can be. State actions for collaboration (including family empowerment) have a positive effect on local practices; however, state initiatives, like their Federal counterparts, are also underfunded, ambiguous, contradictory in their guidance to local administrators, or riddled with gaps and funding restrictions. The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) provides a positive example of one state trying to create a comprehensive reform package for all students.

3. Funding for local programs is usually from a single, restricted, source, but multi-source funding is possible. Combining state and Federal funding and flexible local planning can facilitate the creation of more comprehensive programs. The cases show that single-source funding from Federal and state sources with complex restrictions and set-asides still characterizes the policy system and is a barrier to comprehensive programming.

Local Initiative Is Proof Positive

One positive example of local initiative is in Los Cruces, New Mexico, where a comprehensive service delivery network, with home-school-community collaboration at its hub, draws on an array of Federal, state, district, and private funds. Head Start, Chapter 1, Migrant and Bilingual Education, Follow Through, and Adult Education funds are matched with state and district funds and private money to provide comprehensive services to about 500 children from birth through school age.

4. Consumer demand can spur policies for more comprehensive services and collaboration. Demand from families being served can result in increased opportunities for collaboration and family empowerment; however, there are only a few examples of increased family demand for changes toward more comprehensive services.

Florida's Dade and Broward counties provide a positive example of parents taking the initiative for comprehensive services. Parent facilitators work with social workers and interns in family resource centers in schools. These facilitators, who call themselves RAINmakers, have taken specific roles as paraprofessionals and advocates in the interest of empowering families and developing responsive programs. They have drafted a consumer bill of rights and encourage family involvement in decision making. At the state level, a private advocacy organization, the Florida Family Resource Coalition, is organizing a network of service providers and advocates to influence state policy makers.

5. Private foundation policies can encourage comprehensive programs. This report did not focus on private sector policies, but found much evidence that many private foundations have a strong interest in many of the topics covered in this report. These include Annie B. Casey, Danforth, DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest, Ford, Kellogg, Lilly, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur, Charles Stewart Mott, RJR

(continued on page 12)

The *Research and Development Report* of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, distributed at no charge, summarizes results of the Center's research. Full reports of each study may be ordered from the Publications Office, Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning, Johns Hopkins University, 3505 North Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218. (See last page for report numbers and prices.)

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This work was supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement (R117Q00031) in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The opinions expressed do not reflect policies of OERI or other funding agencies, and no official endorsements should be inferred.

Center on Families, Communities, Schools and Children's Learning

Don Davies, Co-Director, Boston University
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Mission and Programs

The mission of this Center is to conduct research, evaluations, policy analyses, and dissemination to produce new and useful knowledge about how families, schools, and communities influence student motivation, learning, and development. A second important goal is to improve the connections among these major social institutions.

Two research programs guide the Center's work: the *Program on the Early Years of Childhood*, covering children aged birth-10 through the elementary grades; and the *Program on the Years of Early and Late Adolescence*, covering youngsters aged 11-19 through the middle and high school grades.

A third program of Institutional Activities includes a wide range of dissemination projects to extend the Center's national leadership.

Program on the Early Years of Childhood

Sharon Lynn Kagan, Program Director

- Family Education and Training in Early Care and Education (Sharon Lynn Kagan, Yale University)
- Ethnographic Study of Family Support for Young Children's School Success (Susan McAllister Swap, Josephine Bright, Nitza Hidalgo, and Sau-Fong Siu, Wheelock College)
- The Effects of School-to-Home-to-School Communications on Children's Motivation and Learning (Carole Ames, Michigan State University)
- Natural Support Systems: Impact on Puerto Rican Families, Communities, and Schools (Melvin Delgado, Boston University)
- Integration of Family Support and Mental Health Services in Elementary Schools (Lawrence Dolan, Johns Hopkins University)
- Partners in Learning: Family Literacy Programs (Lori Connors, Johns Hopkins University)
- Parent Information for School Choice (Charles Glenn, Boston University)
- Studies of Policies to Increase Family-School-Community Partnerships: (1) Studies of Reaching Out Schools; (2) Identifying and Analyzing Policies; (3) Policy Information and Guidelines (Don Davies, Patricia Burch, Ameetha Palanki, Boston University and Institute for Responsive Education)
- Study of Parent Centers in Schools (Vivian Johnson, Boston University, Institute for Responsive Education)
- The Road to Readiness: Family Needs, Community Resources, and Infant/Toddler Development (Colleen Morisset, ZERO-TO-THREE/NCCIP).

Program on the Years of Early and Late Adolescence

Diane Scott-Jones, Program Director

- Family, School, and Community Connections in Early and Late Adolescence: Research, Development, and Improved Practice in Middle Grades and High Schools (Joyce Epstein, Karen Salinas, Lori Connors, and staff, Johns Hopkins University)
- Adolescent Mothers and Their Children; Family and School from Kindergarten through Adolescence (Diane Scott-Jones, Temple University)
- A Study of Coaching in Community Settings (Saundra Murray Nettles, Johns Hopkins University)
- Integrated Service Delivery: The New Jersey School-Based Services Program (Lawrence Dolan, Johns Hopkins University)

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(continued from page 10)

Nabisco, the Pew Charitable Trusts, and Rockefeller. The researchers note that private funding sources especially can "fill niches that are hard to cover adequately with many government programs, such as research and evaluation, staff training, or the use of telecommunications.

Fitting Policy to Family Needs

Davies, Burch, and Palanki's analysis across cases suggests some elements of policy design which support strategies of collaboration and family empowerment in local programs. These elements are not exhaustive but point to concrete steps which policymakers can consider in developing and evaluating their policies. They include involving the family as agenda setter and partner, establishing broadly representative advisory and policy boards, establishing multiple access points to services, setting up inter-agency and cross-role networks, providing other support for involving families, and using collaborative evaluation mechanisms. ■

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